



CHARIVARIA

HILLARY's arrival at the Pole has not dismayed the Russians. They point out that they already have a base four hundred miles south at the Pole of Inaccessibility, and no one can beat that.

FLEET Street is wondering who forced through the *Daily Mail* decision for a competition "to predict the news in 1958." What's that going to do for the circulation?

WORDS and pictures on British eggs are again in the news with the announcement that for stored eggs the lion stamp is not enough; they must be marked



"chilled" as well. Some people think a process might have been saved here, by redrawing the lion wearing a scarf in Egg Marketing Board colours.

At the Afro-Asian conference Britain's colonial policy came in for scathing attacks by delegates from Kenya, Cyprus, Jordan, Iraq, North Korea, Ghana, Indonesia, North Viet Nam and Russia. This left the Governor of Hongkong, retiring at about the same time, in some doubt as to the exact meaning of a Chinese translation of "Will ye no' come back again?" sung by massed choirs of Chinese school-children.

HEADLINES in *The Times* of January 1st, "Sterling at New Peak: Highest Dollar Rate of 1957: Nine Months' Rise in Revenue: Smaller Deficit" brought a smile, if slight, to the lips of the

overdrawn who had just received their statement of half-yearly bank charges.

CALLING for more N.A.T.O. coherence a *News Chronicle* editorial has asserted that it is no use at all "to go



to Moscow shouting in fifteen different languages." All the same, it might be worth trying.

MILLIONS of Britons were shocked by the New Year Honours list and its stubborn selection of nonentities for distinction. Who, they demanded, was this Miss (now Dame) Macaulay? What claim to fame had the obscure MacNeice? Feeling is rising. Trouble seems inevitable if the Birthday selection still fails to include Sir Billy Cotton, Lord Lustgarten, Dame Jeanne Heal and Earl Pickles.

THAT front page headline "Doomed Fighter Row" pleased many. It was



nice to enter a fresh year knowing that at any rate one row was doomed.

A MR. ROSE, banker, of New York State, recently gaoled for giving local business-men unsecured overdrafts amounting to £357,000, was reported to

be known in his home community as "Robin Hood." So much for the reckless use of non-indigenous folk symbols.

ANOTHER Quiet Moment with the Great ticked into history with the disclosure that Mrs. John Foster Dulles often gets her husband to do the cooking. Brinkmanship critics hope he knows just when to turn off the heat.

MEDICINE in the New Year got off to a promising start with the dispatch



from Atlanta, Georgia, where a man had his salivary glands linked to his tear glands, and "now when I look at food the tears start running down my face." British Railways catering staff say that this will wear off in time.

GERMANY's refusal to accept British fighter planes is disappointing. They were good enough for them in 1940.

As a result of a news item revealing that Mr. R. A. Butler plays the trumpet in his spare time he has been deluged with suggestions that he should ask Dr. Charles Hill round for a few lessons.

Fingers Crossed in 1958

WE look for portents at the new year's start

Of what it brings of revelry or ruth,
And note, with sinking feelings at the heart,

That it commences with the death of Truth.

It's That Man Again

Sir John Wolfenden is heading a new committee to investigate sport in the United Kingdom

THERE has been rather less publicity so far for the new Wolfenden Committee than there was for the last one, and this seems a little hard, as its terms of reference suggest that it may be going over at least a part of the same ground again. Its terms of reference are, in fact, "to examine the factors affecting the development of games, sports and outdoor activities in the United Kingdom" and to recommend such practical measures as the committee concludes will be needed "in order that these activities may play their full part in promoting the general welfare of the community."

As it will no doubt be years and years yet before the committee publishes its report there can be no harm in making a few intelligent guesses about what this will contain.

In the first place the committee will recommend that sporting acts between consenting amateurs and professionals, in public and in private, should no longer be liable to upset the status of either of them.

This proposal will of course raise three important questions: What is meant by "consenting"; What is

meant by "amateurs"; What is meant by "in private."

The criterion of consent will no doubt be taken to be the same as applies to sporting acts between amateurs, or between professionals. In other words, you will be consenting just as much if you only agree to turn out for the Extra "C" in response to an urgent telephone-call at breakfast-time on Saturday morning to the effect that two of the pack have had to cry off because that afternoon is the only convenient time they can find to go and draw their old-age pensions, as if you buy the team secretary a pint of beer every evening until he agrees to ask the captain to give you a game in the First Fifteen.

The meaning of "amateurs" will be as it is generally understood now, players who do not get any financial gain out of playing apart from expenses, fees for appearing in advertisements, Stock Exchange tips, honorary company directorships, salesmen's appointments with paint manufacturers, etc., etc., as may be permitted by the governing body of the sport concerned.

The words "in private" will have been inserted as a safeguard against unscrupulous promoters who, for their own nefarious ends, might descend to hiring the Queen's Proctor or somebody to intervene every time they hear of an amateur associating with a professional in some such sporting act as a game of ping-pong in the loft of one of their houses.

Secondly, the committee will recommend that the usages relating to living on the earnings of pugilism be brought into line with the usages relating to coaching and writing articles about girl tennis-players.

Of course there is nothing actually illegal about living on the earnings of a big, simple man who is only too pleased to let you keep the major part of the gate as long as you keep him well supplied with other big, simple men to fight; nor about showing off your most talented pupils as if they were prize spaniels. There must, as the previous

committee used to say, remain a realm of private morality which is not the law's business.

It is only fair to say that there was a very powerfully-argued reservation by one of the members of the previous committee against this conclusion, and it is just possible that this might happen again.

Thirdly, the committee will recommend that the law relating to street bookmaking be reformulated so as to eliminate the sense of ill-treatment felt by bookies' runners when they see wealthy bookies driving past in their Rolls-Royces to luncheon with a duke at the Savoy.

The proposition that it is anti-social to loiter for the purpose of taking bets applies only to those who have never looked up the word "loiter" in the Oxford Dictionary. There it is defined as "to idle; to linger indolently on one's way; to hang idly about a place; to travel indolently and with frequent pauses" and so on. The committee, who will of course have taken evidence from some suitably qualified member of the Clarendon Press, will naturally come to the conclusion that if there is any loitering being done it is being done less by the street bookie than by the wealthy operator, and they will accordingly recommend that it is he if anyone who should be wheeled in before the beak once a fortnight and fined a couple of pounds.

Fourthly—but the first Wolfenden Committee made thirty recommendations and there is no reason why the second should not make just as many. What, after all, does it matter? It only requires one lawyer to announce that he doesn't think the recommendations are in accordance with the feelings of the ordinary decent British working man for the entire report to be tucked away in a Government pigeonhole somewhere and the whole business forgotten.

And then Sir John Wolfenden can pick a new team and get busy on something else of national importance, such as licensing hours, for example, or fashions.

B. A. YOUNG



"I daresay if I'd been driving a Ford I'd have got away with it."



L.R. AFTER BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

"Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it."

[With acknowledgment to Bruce Bairnsfather]

Time Doesn't Fly

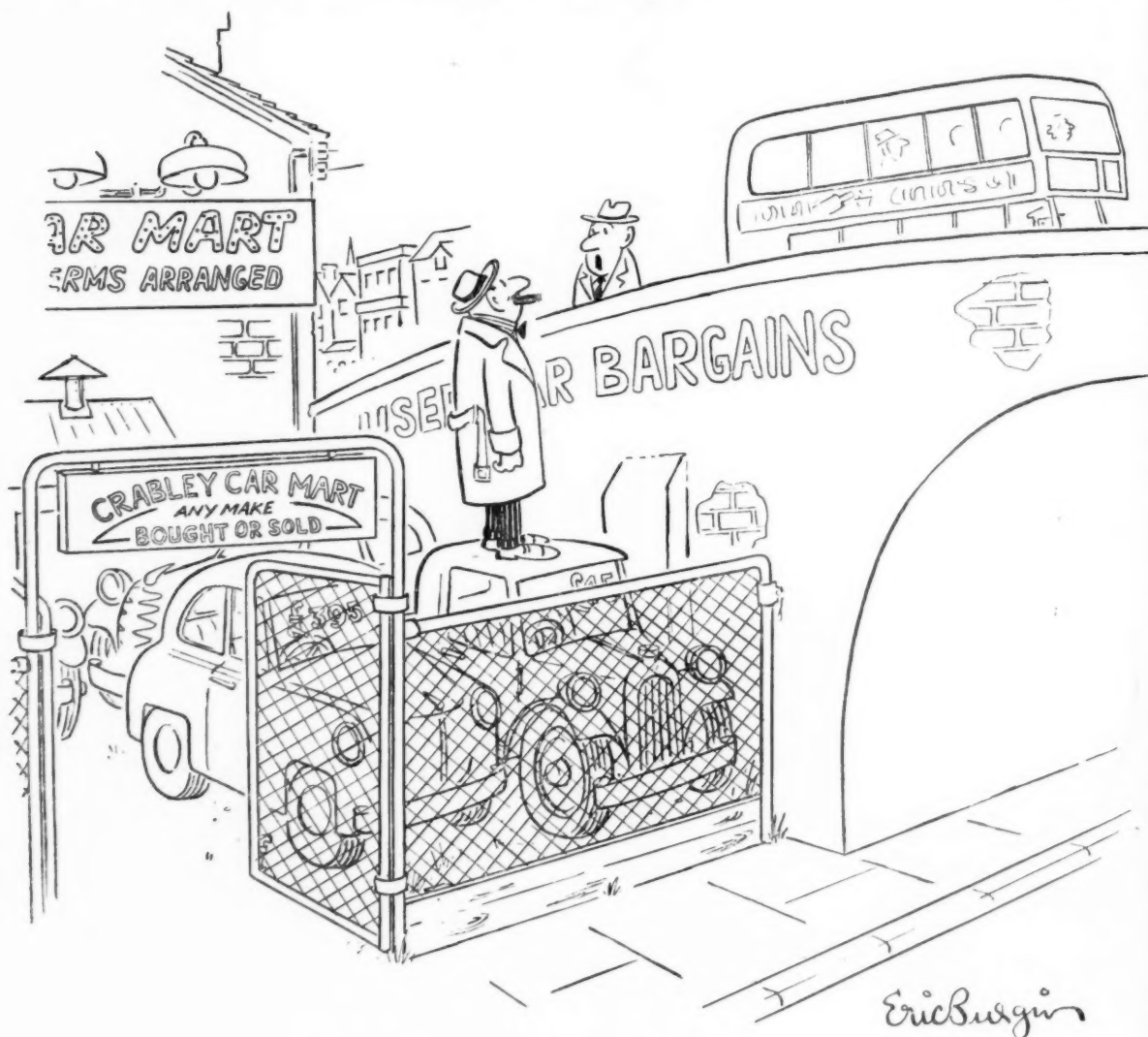
By J. B. BOOTHROYD

A COP of sorts at Idlewild International Airport told me the *Britannia* was a swell ship, he'd seen us touch down. I told him that Idlewild was a swell airport, especially the echoing galleries where we were waiting for our bus, with plate-glass doors opening on a magic ray principle. He told me that it was new, and gave me the acreage, cost, cubic capacity and passenger put-through, and I agreed that it seemed to have everything but ash-trays. He took my cigarette-end and threw it on the gleaming floor.

"They sweep up every hour on the hour around here," he said. And as our bus rolled up outside I told him that the tip of the *Britannia's* tail was the height of two and a half London buses. B.O.A.C. hadn't given me a free briefcase full of handouts for nothing. However, he won the last trick. When I picked up my bag and made for the magic door to the street it didn't open. The cop made signs, and I saw that it was a door marked "IN."

Well, I was tired. The whole trouble with flying the Atlantic is that it takes

so long. We'd left London at half-past ten in the morning, and it was nearly teatime before we got to Greenland. Why, you can do Victoria to Monte Carlo in twenty-four hours by train, and something interesting going past the windows all the time. All you ever get on this trip is a decent sunset. But then we'd had trouble with head winds, and had to make a three-hundred-mile detour, which was how Greenland came into it; this made us slower than ever—added almost another forty minutes. I went up on the flight deck to say some-



"Er . . . nothing thanks—I'm just looking."

thing about this; not exactly a complaint, you understand, but it did seem to me that if we weren't going to start our cocktail party and dinner in New York until seven o'clock—which was midnight by the time we'd been using—I was going to be terribly tired for next day's Fifth Avenue shopping (long-playing records for friends back home, and perhaps a H*th*w*y shirt for me).

The Captain was taking things rather slackly, I thought. Not even driving. Four other men were doing that, while he just lounged about looking at maps. It seemed to me no way to behave at a true air-speed of three hundred and eighty; everyone knows the North Atlantic skyways are packed with aircraft these days (not that I ever saw one, either going or coming). He said that I'd popped in at a rather interesting time, because the wind had gulped a lot of fuel and the weather was bad in New York; he was just deciding whether he might have to land at Goose. "Where's that?" I said. "Labrador," he said and I said "Oh." Privately I hoped he would treat the decision purely as a flying one and not be influenced by the consideration that this was the well-publicized inaugural flight of the first non-stop British transatlantic passenger plane, and that B.O.A.C. would feel a little glum if he decided to stop on the way. However, I supposed that even B.O.A.C.—some of which was on board, enjoying its own free cigars—wouldn't want to run out of juice over Nantucket; even as mere motorists they must know how maddening that can be. However, I said nothing of all this to the Captain, not wishing to upset him or get him into a state of any kind. I just asked how high we were, to taper the conversation, and when he said "Thirty-one thousand" I went back to my seat, working it out roughly at something short of six miles. My next door neighbour had tipped his seat into a bed and was snoring; as I leant over to draw the curtain—the low sun was streaming in rather irritatingly—he woke up and said "What's up—dinner?" I told him not yet and he went back to sleep. He was a journalist.

The trip to the flight deck had passed a useful ten minutes. Another four or five hours sitting in the sky and we should be there. The representative of



"Let 'em have it as a rocket base . . . let 'em have it!"

the B.B.C. came languidly from the washroom. He wore a flowered dressing gown, and though the rest of us pretended scorn we really wished we had thought of it. Though perhaps a quantity of flowered dressing gowns would have seemed silly.

B.O.A.C., of course, is aware that this prolonged loitering tries a passenger's patience and is very inventive to alleviate it, right from take-off, when the stewardess wooed us with trays of sweets while a steward gave a short mannequin show with a life-jacket, and a script beginning "In the unlikely event . . ." After that it was those old champagne cocktails you're always hearing about in connection with

modern travel. Two of them induce a detachment. I stopped worrying—I mean about the slowness. I had to admit that you got a steadier ride than on the Blue Train. The champagne on my chair-arm was getting more vertical disturbance from bubbles than surface ripples from air currents.

The slight, inevitable hiatus between champagne cocktails and sherry was taken up with the gratuitous distribution of cigarettes. Not single cigarettes—we'd had those on the bus to the airport. Not even packets. Cartons. We tucked them into our presentation flight bags, and by that time our tables were being laid, and a silver trolley clinking with bottles was rolling up



ROY DAVIS

and down the gangway. Lunch passed a pleasant hour or two; there was a deliberate leisureliness about it, from the Cornets of Smoked Scotch Salmon Moscovite, through the soup, steak, gâteau, savoury, cheese, celery hearts and fruit to the coffee . . . the champagne, Meursault Charmes, Margaux Casque du Roi, brandy, cigars. And the stewardess came through laughing, having very nearly forgotten to give us our presentation B.O.A.C.-crested cigarette cases.

It seemed impossible, really, having been eating and drinking all that, *still* not to have reached America. And still an hour or so to tea . . . and an hour or two more to dinner. Out of the window, nothing to see but a horizon of cloud as hard and sharp as a horizon of land. Ahead, nothing but a bulkhead with an inscription, tastefully printed in gold:

YOUR LIFE BELT IS UNDER YOUR SEAT
To listen to: the engines, faint but furious, and an aeronautical correspondent in the seat behind discussing civil aviation accident statistics. An announcement by the Captain says that we have come down to five miles up, and that's Greenland out of the port windows. We give it a cursory glance. A steward takes our names and addresses so that we can have our certificates sent to us, commemorating this inaugural experience; another brings a U.S. Customs declaration beginning curtly "Many items of fruit or other plant materials, meat and meat products are prohibited from entry . . ." The stewardess gives us fleecy rugs. There are circles of frost on the windows. "Are we going to Goose?" I ask her. She says she's sure she doesn't know, and twinkles with laughter. According to my handout she "joined B.O.A.C. in 1952 and has flown the Atlantic ever

since." Just like that. Time is hanging heavy again when another steward is bending his white back over us in turn. Would we care to have half a crown in the sweep on the arrival time? "Arrival where?" I ask, but he's sure he doesn't know. The more practical passengers check on the terms of the sweep. "What do you mean by arrival time?" they ask, sucking their pencils—"touch-down or switch-off?" My next-door neighbour, awaking refreshed and ringing for a whisky and soda, tells me a story about hurrying to catch a plane at Rio and not being allowed on the airfield because an Italian job had just crash-landed and blown up. "Complete write-off," he said, yawning. "However, I had my press pass and they let me on . . ." He tipped his bed into a seat again, and got tangled up with his presentation flight bag. "Got a cupboard full," he said. "Gave one to my charlady last week; she'd been carrying a P.A.A. one; couldn't have that."

I must have slept through tea. The next thing I knew was dinner, and towards the end of it the cabin crew hurried. The Captain's loud-speaker quacked at us; expected time of arrival at Idlewild, 2340 hours, G.M.T. So he'd decided. Well, he ought to know. Anyway, my lifebelt was under my seat. The bubbles in my champagne rose confidently.

"Not a good airport to get in," my companion said, when the firmament of lights that was Idlewild appeared below us. A steward bustled through, giving us our hats and overcoats. "No smoking. Fasten seatbelts" said a blue notice, and at long last we were there.

Even coming back, with a following wind, it took more than eight and a half hours. True, it was broken up by presentation scarves and powder compacts for our wives. But eight and a half hours sitting in the sky! It's a terribly long time.

A Vision in Harley Street

IN Harley Street, one foggy night and raw,
I swear by Æsculapius I saw
For one tense second in the swirling mist
An otorhinolaryngologist.

A memorable night it was for me,
Though other men conceivably may be
Well used to slapping guineas in the fists
Of otorhinolaryngologists.

As one in fealty to the National Health,
I hope it isn't true that private wealth
Alone empowers a patient to enlist
An otorhinolaryngologist.

I wonder if their rooms are brown and solemn,
With Harvey's bust upon a fluted column?
How human are they? Has a woman kissed
An otorhinolaryngologist?

Long years ago I knew a Dr. Groat,
A splendid man for ears and nose and throat;
He never dreamed that one day would exist
An otorhinolaryngologist.

I must go down to Harley Street once more . . .
Though probably it won't be long before
One half of its nine hundred specialists
Are otorhinolaryngologists.

E. S. TURNER

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"How was I to know that none of them would have anything in common?"

Hard Times

By H. F. ELLIS

OUR firm makes salt spoons. We're specialists, really.

I keep an eye on the sales charts, and when the boss called me and Joe in I knew there was trouble ahead. He said:

"I'm worried, boys. Trade's bad. There'll have to be a fifty per cent cut in staff all round the way things are going."

"All right," I said. "Who's it to be—me or Joe?"

"Now wait a minute," the boss said. "I got an idea. Do you boys know why we aren't selling all the spoons we used?"

"Yes," we said.

"I'll tell you. It's these darned shakers. Where's the call for a salt spoon so long as folks can get shakers?"

"No call at all," said Joe.

"All right then. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to turn right over to mustard spoons. We're through with salt," he said, sweeping a gross of our second-quality spoons off the workbench.

"It'll mean re-tooling," I told him.

"Mustard spoons have more of a turn-up to them, down the far end."

"The point is," the boss said, "you got to have mustard spoons in a house. Know why? You can't get mustard out of a shaker, not to do any good with it."

"There's some squeeze it out of a tube. Regular toothpaste lark," Joe reminded him.

"Riff-raff," the boss said. "Not in decent homes they don't. It's the quality trade I'm after."

"Above the salt now, eh?" Joe has a kind of rough-and-ready education and can surprise you with it, off and on.

"Another thing," I said, wanting to help. "Maybe you can't get mustard out of a shaker. I'm with the boss there, one hundred. But you can scoop it out of an old chipped coffee cup with the flat of your knife."

"You mean to sit there and tell me," the boss said, staring, "that respectable god-fearing citizens—"

"He's right too," Joe said. "I've seen 'em."

I'll say this for the boss, he never knows when he's beaten. "I'll market

a mustard-pot," he said slowly, "that nobody can get their knife into."

"Narrow neck," Joe put in, getting excited. "So only our special spoons will get results."

"How are you going to mix mustard in a pot with a narrow neck?" I asked them.

"Mix it!" the boss sneered. "You don't mix mustard in the pot you put on the table, not in a proper run house you don't."

"All right," I said. "How are you going to get the mustard into this narrow-necked pot of yours then, when it's mixed?"

"Well for godsake. You can use a funnel, can't you?" the boss argued. "We'll pack a filler-funnel free with every pot, if it comes to that."

"There's one thing," I said, thinking it out. "What are these folk going to mix their mustard in, if they can't do it in the pot?"

The boss kind of hunched his shoulders up and threw a glance around as if for sympathy, which is a weakness of his. "What's that to me?" he said. "Let 'em mix it in one of these old chipped coffee cups of yours, for all I care."

"Look," I said. "If folks start mixing mustard in an old chipped coffee cup, do you know what they are going to do? They're going to slam that old chipped coffee cup right down on the dinner table and scoop the stuff out with the flat of their knives, the way they're doing it now."

"He's right, at that," Joe said.

"You mean they won't have any call for our special mustard pot and spoon, with filler-funnel complete?"

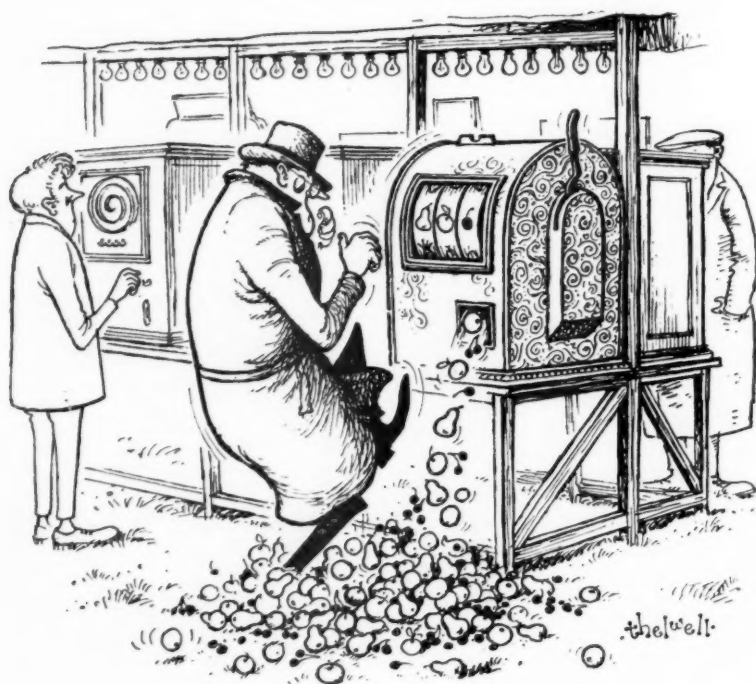
"No call at all," I said.

"All right," the boss said. "It's settled then. We stick to salt spoons—with a fifty per cent cut all round."

"Hold it there a moment, boss," I said, "please." I like old Joe, for all he's a bit ready with his nods—not soapy exactly but happy to give satisfaction in all quarters—and I wouldn't want to see him out in the cold. "We don't want to stampede on this thing. There's always Russia."

"Russia?"

"Expand," I told him, getting off my stool for it. "Never say die. If trade's





"What's so different about me, Bert?"

bad at home, get after it where it's good. Go out foreign."

"Russia!" said the boss again.

"There's a lot of salt out there," Joe said. "Or so they tell me."

"It's in *mines*," the boss shouted. "Do you suppose they're going to start digging it out with one of *these*?"

"You'd be surprised what they do buy, them Russkis," I said. "Stands to reason, really. You can't make sputniks every other day *and* all the bits and pieces on the side. I was talking to a chap in skewers—"

"I'd sooner starve," the boss said.

"Sooner than what?" Joe asked.

"Sooner than later," the boss said, and that was that.

I did some more thinking, though, and after a bit I came round to it.

"Have you thought of pepper, then?" I asked.

"You don't get pepper out of pepper-pots with spoons," the boss said. He kind of spaced the words out, pressing the flat of his hand down on the bench with each one as though he was squashing mosquitoes. And that riled me.

"No indeed," I said, flicking a bit of shirring off my trouser-leg, "you don't. But you do put pepper *into* pepper-pots with spoons. So now then."

The boss went into another of his hunching acts.

"And who's going to buy a special spoon to put pepper into pepper-pots once in a blue moon, tell me that?"

"Anybody," I said. "And glad to do it, given it's the right shape for the job."

"That's it," Joe said. "Now we're on to something."

"Fine," the boss said. "Fine. What is the right shape for putting pepper into pepper-pots, by the way?"

There was quite a silence came over the place at that, and after a bit I bent down and started picking up the second-quality salt spoons off the floor. I know when I'm beaten, if the boss doesn't.

"I shall miss you, Joe," I said, holding out my shaker.

"We shall both miss you," the boss said. Only he said it to me.

"The Government is determined to use whatever pressure it can in order to bet retail prices down to stabilize cost of living. Its policy in this field is entering a new phase."—*Sunday Times*
Evidently.

Jonesy

By CLAUD COCKBURN

"JONESY"—not his true name, but they all called him by it, so it will be convenient for us to do so too—was vulnerable to a fear of boredom which, in its intensity, reached a pitch normally produced in other men only by the expectation of physical torture, the arrival of the morning newspapers, or Dr. Edith Summerskill.

Always acute, this excruciating alarm naturally rose to its peak periods at seasons of social entertainment, as—for example—the summer and autumn in Venice if you could scrape the fare together, and spring with the Maite-sons, and (here we approach the point and crisis of the entire affair) the seasons of Christmas and New Year.

He went, of course. At the period of which we are speaking—which is very recent indeed—it was impossible to "go for Christmas" to anywhere, or "spend" New Year's Day with this or that lot of people without either (a) meeting Jonesy, (b) hearing that he

had just left, or (c) that if you could hang on for another day or two Jonesy would be at the door.

So far so good for Jonesy.

But then, at each season, after the undreamed-of and indeed almost unimaginable tedium of the events themselves came the ineluctable business of writing his "Thank-you" letters. It is known that in this day and age some people try to elude this duty by making telephone calls—even going to the length of pretending that they are doing so because their pens have run out of ink. Others think to make their mark with minimal trouble by sending telegraphic night-letters:—

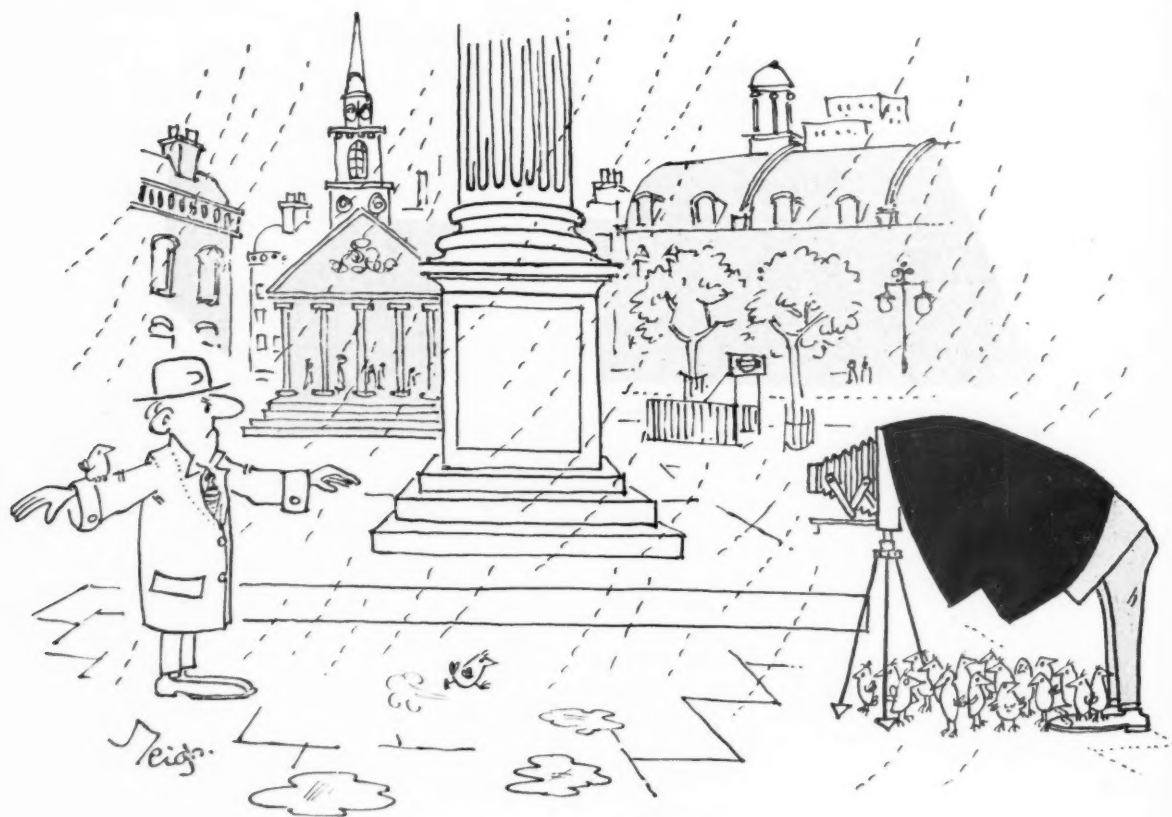
"DEAREST JOAN TELL EVERYONE I JUST CAN APOSTROPHE T BEGIN TO TELL EVERYONE HOW WONDERFUL EVERYONE WAS STOP YOUR APOSTROPHE S PETERKIN."

None at all of this class of caper was for Jonesy.

When he wrote bread-and-butter

letters he wrote them in a straightforward and—if you insist—old-fashioned way. He wrote things such as "Thank you so much for the really delightful week-end. Banal though it may seem to say so—more particularly to you, so many of whose guests must repeatedly and sincerely say the same thing—I really cannot recall any occasion upon which stimulation and relaxation were more perfectly blended. And do tell the Lexingtons that I have not forgotten about that thing I said I would try to do—and I do think I might be able to do something for their nephew unless he is an incurable delinquent—but am simply waiting for the correct tactical moment to write to my cousin who, as I told them, is a cousin of a member of the Board of Directors, or certainly an ex-member at least. I do so hate people to feel that one has in any way let them down."

And this was where the crisis occurred.



Because Jonesy had been bored to near sobs by the Lexingtons. Also he knew from their own accounts that their nephew actually *was* an incurable and, he judged, repellent delinquent, for whom he was now obligated to secure an important and lucrative position with World Electronic Enterprises—probably as boss man of their Brain.

Right there Jonesy got what used to be called "the willies," and he took what some of you will consider (and you may very well be right) the wrong turning.

This new state of affairs for Jonesy occurred simply and swiftly. It was as though one day he had been sitting there on top of a bus and had said to his neighbour "Excuse me, but I think the leader page of your *Daily Telegraph* has somehow got loose from the rest and is on the floor, though if of course you have read it already and are simply trying to disembarass yourself of a formerly useful but now otiose amenity do please forgive me for what may seem an almost loutish intrusion on your personal affairs."

And then next day, as the man next him dropped to the floor a half-completed *Times* crossword puzzle and the middle bit of a piece from a picture paper showing that under the present Government three uncles and an aunt were still sharing a caravan at the bottom of the Devil's Punchbowl, all Jonesy had done was recite *Bishop Blougram's Apology* for his own pleasure all the way to Sloane Square.

Thoughtful people could see that the man was set for a period of unpopularity. When perspicacious men, in their clubs and the better type of restaurant, said to one another over their cocoa or crèmes-de-menthe "How do you think people are looking at Jonesy?" the answer from the sophisticated man of the world who did not mince words was "Askance."

Jonesy, you suppose, cared and sorrowed. Not so. The ending is happy. Because what he did was to write his letters in advance—trusting to the customary chaos of the Christmas posts to eliminate the possibility that they (his joyous letters) would actually get to the Doughnut-Brains' before he himself had been decanted from the car.

They were wonderful letters, and, for those of us who have been privileged to read them, open an almost magic

casement on a world that is, perhaps, and if so alas! no more. His letter of thanks to Mrs. Looner for that week-end during which Love in its most sublime form came to Jonesy, during the Saturday of which a fellow-guest who happened to be a philosopher explained to him the full meaning of life, and all present demonstrated in their every

word and gesture the truth of the fact that the human race is all it has ever been cracked up to be, was a great, moving document, and could never have been written had he not at the last moment resisted the impulse to visit Mrs. Looner at all and remained in Kensington—writing, writing, writing.

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage



CLXXXVII

SO Harold flies benignly overseas,

His eager spirit all alight to show

Colleagues in Asia and the Antipodes

How like an angel Premiers can grow,

Yet glances homeward every hour or so,

Lest on his native shore long-threaten'd squalls—

Ill news from Cyprus, say, or Saunders-Roe—

May bring him posting back to where stern duty calls.

B. A. Y.



Please Mister, You Take Home Delivery

NEW YORK's most august daily newspaper employs telephone canvassers. It is a part-time job which involves 'phoning up the natives of New York and persuading them to take home delivery of the paper. This work is done in the evenings, and the canvassers are a devoted band of fanatics. I have been one now for several months. The canvasser for the *New York Times* has in all things to conform to the tone of the paper he is selling. His voice must be mellow and urbane, his attitude polite, but never humble. He must get his personality over as a cross between a persuasive rich uncle and a firm but understanding psychiatrist. He is the deadly combination of Machiavelli and Freud.

Can anyone resist this combination? Yes, you bet. Hundreds do every night. Often, as the psychiatrist would say, the lines of communication get tangled. In other words the people don't quite "dig" you. My third call went something like this.

"Good evening, Mrs. Djegerowsky, this is Mr. Price of the *New York Times* Circulation Department. Is your husband at home? . . . (embarrassed): I'm terribly sorry. You pronounce it Gowsky. Well, Mrs. Gowsky, is Mr. Gowsky at home? . . . Did you say he has been in bed for four years? . . . (even more embarrassed) Oh, you said he has been dead for four years. I'm frightfully sorry. Well, the reason for this call, Mrs. Gowsky, is to tell you that we can now deliver the *Times* to your door by 6.30 every morning. . . . (controlling temper admirably) No, madam, it's a newspaper. . . . No, Mrs. Gowsky, you don't have to get up at 6.30 yourself. We just deliver it at

By STANLEY PRICE

that time . . . Yes, madam, it is only printed in English. . . . No, there is no Lithuanian edition. Maybe in a few years. . . . Did you say you will be dead in a few years? I'm afraid this is a rather bad wire this evening. . . . You're not interested, Mrs. Gowsky. . . . No, don't do that, Mrs. Gowsky, I'll certainly never bother you again."

The fascination of the job is purely sociological. The multifold society of New York is stripped naked by one's telephone. The honeymoon couple, the bitter wife, the hen-pecked husband, the neurotic analyst, the incredible agglomeration of peoples bundled so tightly into one block—none is safe from your itchy dialling finger.

After a couple of weeks on the job the ear is cauliflowered but the mind is magnificently broadened. One has learned not to call on Rabbis on Saturdays, to leave Mohammedans strictly alone on Fridays, and not to rely too heavily on Christian charity on Mondays. Terrible things happen, but one's sang-froid is immune.

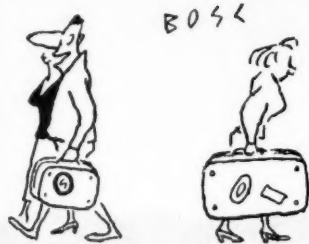
Perhaps one begins as usual. "This is Mr. Price of the *New York Times* Circulation Department." A Brandoesque voice at the other end says "So what." You tell him what, and he says that he doesn't read the sissy papers. You reason with him. He says that even your voice has that sissy English accent. You ring off before the conversation gets to H-bombs. Sometimes one is answered by the sultry-beauty-in-the-bubble-bath voice. She calls you "Honey" and says she will take home delivery if you deliver it yourself every morning at 6.30. Before she can say "Ring twice and ask for Marigold" you

ring off. Probably she would probably tire of you as soon as the *Herald-Tribune* man started calling, anyway.

Frequently there are those delightfully naïve and gullible folk who are enormously impressed that the *Times* should call them up personally. They fondly imagine that you have selected them from all New York for your call. It is obviously a matter of tremendous importance to the Managing Editor that they take home delivery of his paper. Don't ruin their dream. They are as flattered as if the President himself had called them up and asked them to vote next election day.

Most disturbing are the anxiety-haunted. The minute you mention the word newspaper they are in a mad panic. To be called by a newspaper is the harbinger of sudden doom. They scream out "What's the matter? I've got a sick old mother in the house. Please be sure before you tell me anything." It can take up to ten minutes to pacify these people, and then you haven't the heart to sell them home delivery very convincingly.

Great light is shed on the American domestic scene, and one suspects that this scene is now becoming universal. When the 'phone is answered there is the noise of a TV set, too blaring to be accurately termed background. Father cannot hear you, so he turns the set down. Immediately the voices of his family come over stridently, damning him as a nuisance, and telling him to get off the telephone. He might be a six-foot-four-inch navy, but his voice now has the contrition of Jose Ferrer playing the dwarf Lautrec. In his panic to be rid of you he may give you an order, or he may just hang up. The husband will sometimes say Yes, but in the background will



be the martinet voice of Mrs. America, trained in repelling salesmen and "boarders" alike, and she will always be screaming No.

Yet America is not entirely a land of conformity. Or perhaps I encountered the exception that proves the rule. I had run out of spiel with one woman, and happened to glance at the notes on the job that lay in front of me. I repeated a sentence that caught my eye. "Madam, a great many of your neighbours now take this excellent service." That did it. "Who cares about the damn neighbours?" she screamed. "They are all crazy anyway," and with that she rang off. Some apartment dwellers are suspicious too. They frequently stop one dead by telling you that if the paper is left outside the door it will be stolen by the neighbours.

Two months on the job and one realizes why the sociologist and psychiatrist are kept so busy in America. If it's not the Id or the Joneses it's the burglars. The H-bomb is small fry compared with the strains of urban civilization. There are two downright lunatics to every ten calls, and that's not counting the four or five who are having their heads examined at this very moment.

In odd moments I sit and mentally doodle, wondering what it will be like when this idea hits England.

"Good evening, madam, this is Forsythe of the London Times here . . . You aren't interested, Mrs. Smythe, you only read the picture papers? . . . But, Mrs. Smythe, we have pictures on our back page."

"GIRL REPORTER, 20/22, with at least 18 months' experience required to train on leading evening paper. Will work initially in reporters' room, covering all assignments and must be able to look after herself in tough news gathering area."—*World's Press News and Advertisers' Review*

Be safer when she gets outside.

Lucy and the Mariner

(A person from Porlock, who wishes to remain anonymous, discovered the following M.S. under a primrose by the river's brim half-way between Kendal and Grasmere. Written in two separate hands, the poem seems to be compounded exclusively of material taken either from Wordsworth's "Lucy" or Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." If Lucy indeed met the Mariner, what more seemly than that both poets should in collaboration have penned a Lyrical Ballad to celebrate the rendezvous?)

SHE slept among the untrodden
ways

Beside the springs of Dove
With water, water everywhere
And very few to love:

Alone, alone, all, all alone
In the leafy month of June,
A violet by a mossy stone
Beneath an evening moon.

But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With broad and burning face:
"What loud uproar bursts from that
door?
Heaven's Mother send us grace!

It is an ancient Mariner
From lands beyond the sea.
By thy long grey beard and glittering
eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!

And thou art sportive as the
fawn
Upon the ribb'd sea sand."

"Fear not, fear not! A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown.
You shall be mine and I will make
A lady for my own."

"Hold off! Unhand me, greybeard loon,
Here in this happy dell . . ."
Yet vital feelings of delight
Her virgin bosom swell.

Her beams bemoek the sultry main
Like April hoar-frost spread.
What fond and wayward thoughts will
slide
Into a lover's head!

The bridegroom's doors are opened
wide:

"Come near and nearer still!"
(Oh, mercy! to myself I cried,
The Mariner hath his will.)

PAUL DEHN



"But didn't I tell you, Mr. Hackridge? My Christian name is Lysistrata."

A Passport Secretly Green

By NOEL PERRIN

WHEN I was first a research student at Cambridge, three years ago, I used to spend a great deal of my time avoiding other Americans. They in turn avoided me, and each other. If we saw another American coming we would instantly flatten into a doorway or scurry into the nearest bookshop, holding our college scarves around our faces to distract attention.

This unsocial behaviour baffled other foreign students, who generally liked to keep up home ties. Most Indians at Cambridge, for example, belonged to an elegant Asiatic club called the Majlis; they had Nehru up to speak every now and then (I met him that way) and gave rice-and-curry dinners in each others' rooms.

East Africans of every race and colour spent their spare time at the Tusker Club, reminiscing about elephant hunts and the cheapness of Rhodesian cigarettes. Australians hung out at the Australia Club, where they were rumoured to keep a wallaby. West Indians foregathered at the West Indian Society, Canadians at the Canada Club. Even the Welsh students maintained a mysterious Celtic organization called Cymdeithas y Mabinogion.

But the eighty or so Americans at Cambridge not only had no club, we wouldn't so much as exchange a baseball score. Instead we talked, not to each other, about rowing.

What was worse, none of us ever spoke a civil word to any of the blue-uniformed U.S. airmen from Lakenheath Air Base who filled the Cambridge pubs and dated a proportion of the local girls on week-ends. Few of us ever fraternized with the free-spending American tourists who trooped through our colleges in the spring. Purists among us were even careful to avoid Oxford "because of all the Rhodes scholars." We were, in a phrase a number of us had picked up, "frightfully keen" to avoid the taint of New-Worldism.

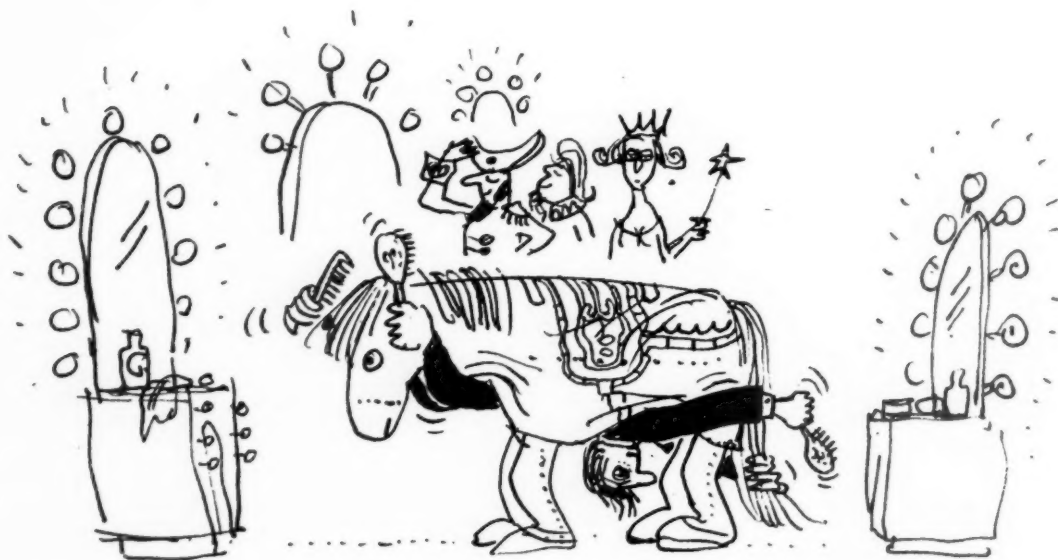
I was as keen as any; and during the Easter Term of 1955 I was generally admitted to be the most inconspicuous American in residence. I went on rare occasions to Oxford, it's true, but only to visit an almost flagrantly English friend at Oriol. My police book (all foreigners in England have police books: it's required under the Aliens Order, 1953), which I should have carried with me on such trips, I kept under a pile of socks in my bottom bureau drawer,

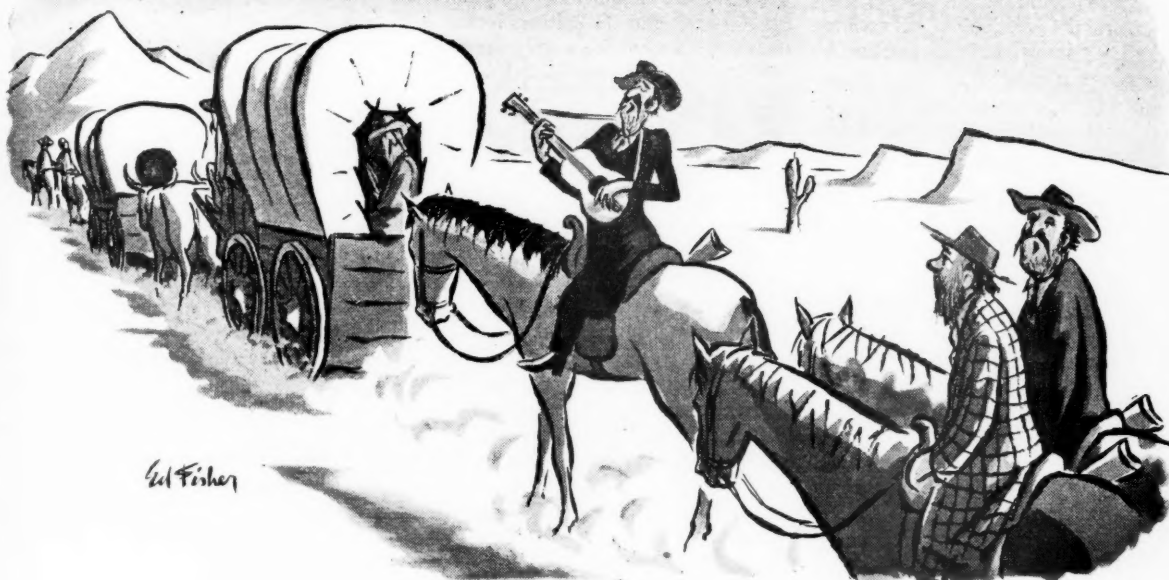
next to my green-and-gilt passport with the signature of John Foster Dulles.

Even the three men with whom I shared lodgings served me as a sort of protective coloration. Roger Azouli, the one I knew best, was an Anglo-Egyptian of vaguely royal descent; he'd been to school most of his life in Surrey, and admired the later phases of Proust. He also admired a good Cambridge accent, and had one.

Marie-Claude Beauchet, only son of a well-to-do family from Marseilles, came next. In theory a student of international law, Marie-Claude's actual interest lay in social psychology. He spent his time in England writing a book on that of the English upper middle class. "Sex, Gin and Gentility," he planned to call it. Finally came our one true-born Briton, an archaeologist from Staffordshire named T. F. R. Simmons.

In the company of these three I was beautifully anonymous. With Roger I often used to spend a June afternoon lounging on the meadowy Backs near King's College Chapel, while he read *Time Regained* aloud. Sometimes, if we were wearing our college blazers, we would hear a series of clicks and look up to see a party of tourists eagerly





"'Course, there'll never be any place for him in the west."

photographing us. Once a Presbyterian minister from Detroit, Michigan, asked me to take a picture of him against the chapel.

"Over for long?" I asked him, sighting through his camera.

"Just a month, I'm afraid. Oh, it must be *wonderful* to live in a place like this," he said enviously, staring at a fifteenth-century wall hung with roses.

I nodded in a proprietary, English way. "Pity you weren't here for the tulips," I said.

Equally successful was a holiday I spent once in Somerset with Marie-Claude. While he pursued psychological research with two girls from Bristol, I looked at architecture in Bath. One morning, attired as usual in my blazer and college tie, I rode over to Bath Abbey to look at the angels climbing down the ladders outside. One thing led to another, and presently I found myself inside, short guide to the Abbey in hand, peering at the fan vaulting of the choir. As I stood there three ladies from the southern area of the United States came up. "I beg your pardon," said the boldest of them. "Could you tell us what sort of ceilin' that is?"

I could, and I did. Unobtrusively slipping the guide-book in my pocket, I took them all through the Abbey, giving special attention to the carving in Prior Bird's chantry. "This has been just delightful," sighed their leader when I had finished. "I love talkin' to you cultured Englishmen. Why, we couldn't even get our husbands to come *in* the Abbey."

My life was full of incidents like this. Once, when I was in Edinburgh over Christmas, I even persuaded the proprietress of a small and extremely Scottish hotel to give me bed and breakfast at a shilling off her usual rate on account of my quite genuine poverty. Her expression, when I signed the guest book and she realized that I was from New York rather than Sheffield, remains a memory beyond treasure.

There came a darker incident, though. It was all Roger's fault. I belonged in those days (I needed the money) to an organization called the Military District for Great Britain, United States Army. Its members were all reserve officers living in England. We met twice a month in London and did two weeks' training in the summer. The

uniform needful for this training I kept well to the back of my closet in Cambridge.

Roger, who was descended, as he often told us, from the commander-in-chief of the Turkish army that conquered Egypt in 1517, was obsessed by this uniform. He was convinced that if he put it on he could pass for an American officer. He even had a bet with Simmons about it. Eventually of course he *did* put it on, and sallied forth in search of U.S. airmen. The rest of us tagged along to watch.

But there were no airmen to be found. As I later learned, Lakenheath had some kind of alert that week-end, and all passes were cancelled. By nine o'clock Saturday evening we had wound up in a pub known locally as Little America, empty except for ourselves and a couple of bewildered girls. "It's the first time in fifteen years anyone has walked through Cambridge without stumbling over half your damned Air Force," Roger was saying to me bitterly, when the door opened and three rather bleary-eyed British soldiers filed in. Roger began to quiver at once.

"Terence," he said to Simmons,

tugging my Ike jacket down to his narrow hips, "the moment has come. Lieutenant Roger Azouli, U.S. Army, is moving into action."

"Against the British?" Simmons asked. "Not on my ten bob. You could put on a kepi and say you were General De Gaulle, and the average Tommy would believe you. Either you find an American or the bet is off."

Roger wasn't even listening. He rose and walked over to the soldiers' table, pulling out a cigarette as he went. I followed apprehensively. As we arrived, all three got to their feet.

"I say," Roger began in a clear voice, "could one of you let me have a match?" The senior of the three, a lance-corporal with a red face, reached in his pocket and took out a box of large wooden matches.

"Right you are, sir," he said, and

handed them to Roger, who lit his cigarette and handed them back.

"Thanks," said Roger. Then there was a silence. Roger took two puffs on his cigarette, and the soldiers looked at their feet. Roger took a deep draw.

"You chaps from around here?" he asked finally.

"Urh," said the corporal, swaying slightly. He looked as if he wanted to sit down.

"I'm from the United States, myself," Roger volunteered. "A place called Philadelphia, to be exact."

"No, you ain't," said one of the other soldiers with surprising pugnacity. "You ain't no American. You talk like an Englishman and you look like a Wog."

Roger flushed at this description. He looked as if he were about to fight like a Turk.

"Come on, Roger," I said nervously. "Let's go."

I should never have opened my mouth. The soldier turned his full attention to me. "You're a Yank," he said accusingly. "Where's your ruddy uniform? Lost it?"

"Come on, Roger," I repeated.

"Is that your uniform on the Wog?" the soldier demanded. "What's the matter? Ashamed of it, are yer?"

I pulled Roger away more or less by force. Picking up Terence and Marie-Claude as we passed, we beat a shameful retreat to our lodgings.

Thursday, two weeks later, which was the Fourth of July, I took some pains to wear a small enamelled American flag—it cost me one and threepence in London—prominently in my button-hole. Roger talked of wearing one also, but I wouldn't let him.

A Prince of Sib-Spreaders

By MAURICE RICHARDSON

BEFORE proceeding with this brief memoir of Timothy Miskin, whose recent death was such a blow to Public Relations, I had better tell you something about his rather esoteric profession. What is a Sib-Spreader?

A Sib, short for sibilant, is a story or rumour concocted to promote a set purpose, generally the sales of a particular product. A good selling Sib is often oblique with the point in a throwaway line at the end. An example that used to be very popular in the nineteen-thirties and is still a favourite with professors at advertising colleges is

the following which I reproduce in skeleton form:

Sib-Spreader's friend is motoring across Salisbury Plain when he is stopped by chauffeur of Rolls Royce having trouble changing a wheel. He proffers his jack and in helping chauffeur operate it experiences a twinge of backache. Occupant of the Rolls Royce, an elderly professional-looking gentleman, thanks him for his help and says: "That's a nasty little attack of rheumatism you seem to have contracted. If you take my advice you'll have a rub with —'s liniment when you get home. It's better than any prescription. I'm supposed to know what I'm talking about. My name is Horder, by the way."

The qualifications of a Sib-Spreader are various and contradictory. You might think that all that is required is a good mixer, but good mixers are not always reliable. The strain is great. Many an apprentice Sib-Spreader has been found paralysed, long before his day's work was done, suffering from amnesia, aphasia and aphonia. In no branch of the advertising industry is wastage of personnel so high.

Nor is mere persistence enough. For persistence is all too often the prerogative of the bore, whereas it is essential for the Sib-Spreader to establish an instant sympathetic rapport with his public.

Which brings us to Timothy Miskin. There were no indications in his background of the peculiar talent for which he was to become famous, though it has been fancifully suggested that the name Miskin, which is of Slavonic origin, might imply some affinity with the game of Russian Scandal. He was born of respectable subtopian parentage. His father was an accountant for a firm of arithmetic text-book publishers.

As a youth Timothy Miskin seems to have been an utterly nondescript personality, but a little biographical research reveals a significantly pervasive quality. "Miskin?" says one who had



been at school with him, "of course I remember Miskin. Couldn't begin to tell you what he looked like, but he had a funny little soft voice and he was always standing by the radiators in the passage. He always had something darned interesting to tell you, too. It might be that the moths had eaten all the uniforms in the armoury so there would be no more corps parades, or that the scum-pox epidemic had got so bad we were all going to be sent home. It was nearly always something too good to be true but it cheered you up no end."

Obviously, the seeds were already germinating. It was his father's intention to article the boy to a chartered accountant, but Timothy, on leaving school, expressed so strong a preference for a more creative branch of commerce that a post was found for him in an advertising agency—in the Market Research Department.

The Agency's Market Research Department was investigating the popularity of a certain brand of cocoa. It transpired that in one of the areas where the researchers were at work the sales of this cocoa had risen to an altogether unprecedented extent. Inquiries were made and the cause was discovered to be Timothy Miskin. Not content with filling in his questionnaire forms he had embarked on a work of supererogation to swell the sales of the brand. This, according to the story he told, had remarkable aphrodisiac properties, quite benign but perfectly distinct. They were due to the presence in the beverage of the seeds of the Yohimbe tree, which is well known to the natives of West Africa as the source of a powerful love potion. The site of this particular cocoa company's plantation was liberally dotted about with Yohimbe trees whose seeds, carried by the wind, found their way into the cocoa powder along with the berries.

The Agency's Managing Director realized that here was a case of a natural-born Sib-Spreader, a true artist such as only occurs once in several generations.

Henceforward Miskin's career was one long steady triumphant procession. His accomplishment was prodigious. Entering a town just before opening time he would flit from bar to bar like a wraith, leaving no personal

impression whatever save for that soft ghostly unforgettable voice which echoed in the ears of landlord and customers for days afterwards:

"Extraordinary story that chap who was in here at lunch time was telling us about his friend and the fortune-teller who told him his life was going to be saved by a bottle with a label with a picture of a fig-tree on it!"

"Yes, wasn't it! Shouldn't be surprised if there wasn't something in it, too. Think I'll pop across to the chemist and treat myself to one . . ."

"Arthur, what was the name of the brand of shag the tramp was smoking that Sir Winston Churchill congratulated him on? Bulldog, wasn't it?"

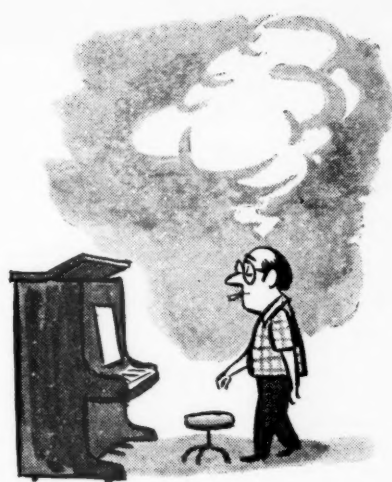
"That's right. You'd better look sharp, though. There are queues at all the tobacconists' . . ."

"According to what he was telling us, and you could tell from the way he spoke that he had it straight from the horse's mouth, there's only one cure for superfluous hair. It's a secret of the Egyptian Royal Family passed down from father to son. Well, this firm has at last persuaded Farouk to let them have it—at a stiff price, of course, to put on the market. But there won't be very much of it, so if I was your missus, old man, I'd shove my order in p.d.q. . ."

Such was Miskin's strange hypnotic power that no matter how elaborate the Sib, nobody ever forgot a single detail. In order to avoid chaos he used to restrict himself to spreading one Sib at a time. His tours were eagerly followed at the Agency's head office. As the sales charts of the product that was being sibbed bounded ceilingwards the account executives would gleefully raise their glasses of British wine samples and exclaim "Good old Miskin! Just look how he's slipping them the Sib. Boy, what a spreader!"

The strain however was tremendous. Not so much the physical strain—Miskin's digestion was a mysterious law unto itself—as the psychological. Miskin, it is now believed, put so much of himself into his Sibs that there were moments when his whole personality disappeared as if drained away.

It is tempting to speculate what would have become of him during the war if he had been old enough to serve in the large department of the Ministry of Information, recruited from the advertising agencies, whose job it was to originate suitable political and military Sibs for spreading in enemy





and neutral countries. His inability to speak any foreign language beyond a few words of schoolboy French would certainly not have deterred our Intelligence Authorities from parachuting him into occupied Europe. Would his curious powers of evasion have enabled him to escape the Gestapo? If so, the war would have ended a great deal sooner.

But Timothy Miskin's life was short enough as it was.

The circumstances of his death have given rise to ugly rumours. These can now be categorically denied. Miskin was not nobbled by envious Sib-Spreaders.

His supremacy was unchallenged. To this day publicity men relate with relish the story of how Miskin and his closest rival, a eupeptic extrovert named Charlie Champion, entered, simultaneously, the Long Bar of a celebrated

North Midlands hotel and commenced spreading textile Sibs from different ends. Champion's Sib had only travelled a few feet along the bar when it was blocked by Miskin's and, a moment later, Champion had the humiliating experience of listening to his rival's Sib being repeated back to him with that gusto for which the North Midlands are so famous.

With regret it must be recorded that his employers, taking advantage of his preternatural zeal, encouraged Miskin to work himself to extinction. His waking life became a continuous cycle of Sib-Spreading. He was kept in circulation at social functions of all kinds, cocktail parties, dances, weddings and funerals where his *sotto voce* technique was particularly telling in spreading the Sib from pew to pew.

He was also made a member of every club in London, including of

course the House of Commons, and it was here that the ultimate fatality occurred.

Miskin was sitting for the Party in power, and it was his custom before proceeding to the House to drop in at the advertising agency for his day's briefing. The account executive on this particular morning was either very negligent or very inexperienced. He issued Miskin such contradictory directives that when the House divided he entered, first, one lobby, where he spread a Sib that persuaded the Government to vote against itself, then the other, where he persuaded the Opposition to vote for the Government. In the small hours of the morning the shrunken corpse of Miskin was discovered in the Strangers' Bar. He had succumbed to the strain—like the chameleon which perishes when placed upon a patch-work quilt.

Precious Heritage

By PETER DICKINSON

WEDNESDAY'S children will be the first to deplore a mug that is now on the market. Smug, even for a mug, it lists its little prophecies:

Monday's child is fair of face

Tuesday's child is full of grace

Wednesday's child will know no woe . . .

Middle-aged men have been heard muttering along Pall Mall about this revision, rapping their umbrellas on the pavement to emphasize the way in which the new generation can't take it. Charity sets in after luncheon and they start agreeing with each other that it's not really *their* fault seeing that they've been mollicoddled from the cradle . . . and so on, all the way back to the City.

What makes their indignation all the more absurd is that Wednesday was really the best bet in the week. Compare Monday's Diana, more freckle than face and distinguishable from her loaf-visaged companions only by the brass band that holds her teeth in; or Reggie, unable to speak for gum and embarrassment when aunts expect him to live up to the standard that Tuesday set him. What have they got on Wednesday's child, steeped in lovely woe and the beauty of being different, maundering in deep, star-visioned, heroic melancholy along the edge of the playing-field and all the while saving the Galactic Federation by his own blazing death beyond Vega?

If the itch for calendar reform is fated to spread to the nursery, the sufferer for whom something must be done is the child that is born on the Sabbath Day. For eight years I fought with another boy over whether the sixteenth or eighteenth of December, 1927, was a Sunday, and at the end of it, I am glad to say, he turned out to be the Sabbatarian; though being loving and giving is bad enough in itself and foreshadows a steady future of alimony. Thursday and Saturday are a little better off, though having far to go is less usually connected with rockets to Orion than with adults, confronted with precocity and at a loss for a *mot*, saying flatly "That child will go far." While working hard for one's living, if not demonstrably wet, has little charm for children.

Wednesday's child did not always

have his sorrow to himself; some early saw-monger who knew about child morality tried to even the balance with

Friday's child is given to thieving

but even in a robust age he stood no chance against the blind millions who believe that children are as lovely-minded as they look when they are asleep. His failure was an early symptom of what we are in for; this slump in the woe market is another, and so is the publication of a book of nursery rhymes called *Who'll Wed Cock Robin?*

It will be recalled that Bowdler's *Family Shakespeare* was published in 1818, some fifty years before we reached the awful and vertiginous peaks of Victorian propriety. Trends move quicker these days, and it may not be more than thirty years before a mention of blood, a suggestion of chastisement, will send young ladies into the vapours

and land the young wretch who spoke the words with ten days' bread-and-water. This will mean the re-writing of most of the classics, which will leave some of to-day's epics looking rather thin; and someone will have to think up a series of acceptable periphrases to explain to the tax-payer why his money is needed to stock-pile another batch of cobalt bombs.

Not that propriety will put an end to violence, or do more than drive it underground. Gruesome deeds will be done in secret, and it seems a pity that newspaper headlines will by then be too chaste to tell us about them, especially as I shall be a bit old to take a hand myself. It looks as though I shall have to content myself with an unburnt copy of *The Cruel Sea*, which should be fetching a collector's price. Not that that will affect me; being a Friday's child I shall have got it by thieving.



THE NEW MAYHEW—

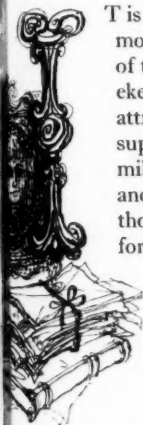
A hundred years ago Henry Mayhew, a former joint-editor of *Punch*, wrote *London Labour and the London Poor*. ALEX ATKINSON and RONALD SEARLE make a modern reassessment.



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—THE EXILE

Editor
Poor.
Modern



It is inevitable that many of the more unfortunate inhabitants of this great capital city should eke out their lives without attracting any but the most superficial attention from the millions that surround them; and this is especially true of those men and women of foreign birth who have sought refuge here from political or racial discrimination and oppression. For these exiles, as they are called, are not normally inclined to advertise their presence among us; being for the most part content (if, indeed, they can in such circumstances ever be accounted content) to exist quietly from day to day in some unfashionable backwater, consoled in the knowledge that footsteps upon the landing are unlikely to herald either torture or incarceration.

In fact the exile from whom I obtained the present account had on only one occasion ventured to behave in a fashion calculated to set him apart in any particular from the natives: and that on what he represented as being the most urgent provocation. To wit, he had walked in procession, with some fifteen of his exiled compatriots, to present a petition to the head of a Government department, pointing out what seemed to them the folly or short-sightedness of some aspect of Britain's foreign policy as it related to the Power at present in control of his unhappy country. This enterprise, while not eliciting more than a polite acknowledgment from the Department, provided entertainment for a number of English ladies and gentlemen along the route. These fortunate souls, secure in their conviction that politics can neither concern nor affect any save those who earn a living by it, and being in any case scornfully ignorant of the issues involved, were pleased to smile at the flimsy placards borne by the exiles, with their remote and incomprehensible slogans; and at the exiles themselves, since they were demonstrably of foreign extraction at the very least.

"Yet none threw stones," said my informant. "No fighting broke out, and not anybody did spit where we walk.

This is so desirable to be in Britain: all will permit demonstratings of each kind, and no hand is raised in preventing. It is freedom, this, which we love. One may exclaim loudly in any place here, concerning various important doctrines: no sword is drawn to prevent this. So—is freedom. But, is something *done* at any time as result of the demonstratings? Never. All may speak, the wise men and the prophet, and together the imbecile, the crack pot: but is notice taken of all this that is variously spoken? Never. There is freedom to make all objections, and then to proceed as yesterday. This is the British way, and is admirable, because all say so. Therefore I am gratified for the freedom, and wait to see what it may bring."

He lived in a single room at the top of a house in the Bloomsbury district, with the use of a sink and gas stove in the passage. The bathroom was one flight down. His room was a large attic, with a view of chimney-pots, and I could not but remark that in some subtle fashion it had already become part of a foreign land, here in the heart of London. I could not determine how this had come about, but the very atmosphere was foreign: even the smell of the place, which had about it a faint, spicy, aromatic flavour which made me think of incense. He was delighted to show me his books, of which he was immensely proud, for they included the works of his national poet. It was a great disappointment to him that nobody in this country (except perhaps a few erudite scholars) had heard of the poet, who died in 1744 and is revered by the common people of his own land far more than Shakespeare is in England. "Here among the poor your Shakespeare is a humorous joke for the circus [I think he had in mind the music-hall], but in my country these books are read and loved by the humblest peasant. But then, of course, we are a people who are mingling tradition in our daily life. If we had Horse Guards we would not only take snapshots of them for their prettiness: we would also know what they were for."

I ate unfamiliar cakes with him, and drank strong tea from strange, old vessels. For half an hour I was abroad, in a land I did not know. Upon the

walls there were faded photographs of bearded men, and of women wearing ribboned headdresses. One, not faded, was of his wife, whose stomach had been ripped open by a bayonet for the furtherance of some political cause. She had a knowing smile. There were objects of religion, bundles of letters, stringed instruments of a shape I had not seen, a framed picture of our Royal Family, many newspapers printed in his own language, and a smoking-cap with a long tassel.

Here among mute reminders of past happiness and torment, he waited for some miracle that would banish intolerance and spite from the world outside and grant him a place in it. Until that time came, or until death, he was resigned to earning his food in this shabby room by giving music lessons.

He felt great love for the English, and spoke at length of his gratitude to the common people of our land, who had, he insisted, taken him in and given him sanctuary and kindness. They sniggered at his accent, and pointed at his baggy trousers, and nudged one another when he tried in casual conversation to give them some idea of what was going forward in the world of international politics to-day, but still he loved them. "They cannot help to be stupid," he told me, "and it should not be held against them. A government gets the people it deserves."

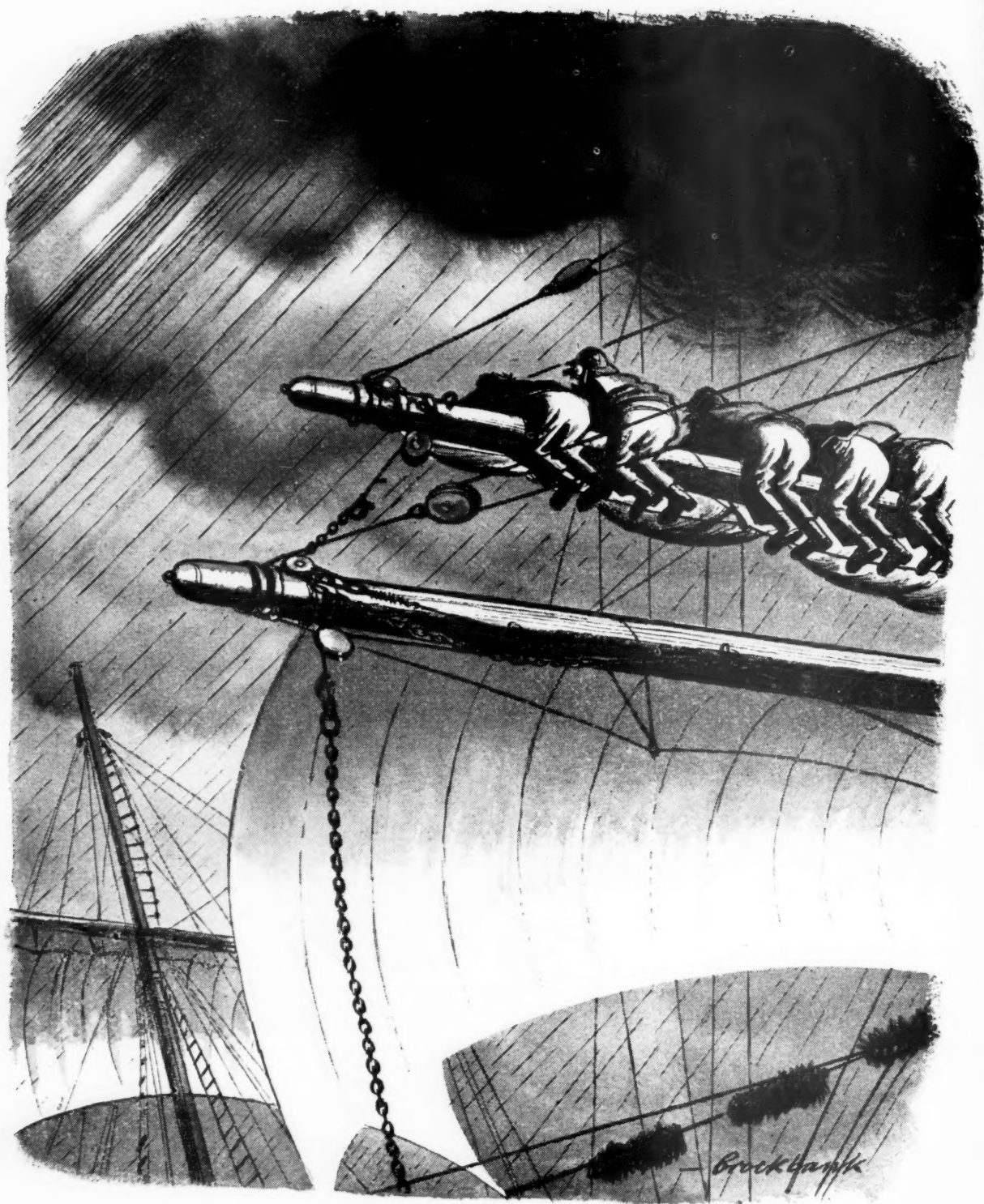
Sometimes half a dozen of his fellow exiles would bring food for a party, and they would sing, and talk of home, or philosophy. It was very pleasant, he said. Only the previous night they had made a large stew and discussed Kant, and an English friend (a school-mistress) had not felt very well.

I was at a loss to understand how he managed financially, and he seemed to have no clear idea himself. "When things are not good," he said, "someone helps. And then, if you will excuse me to say so, I believe in God."

When I left I questioned several people in neighbouring houses, hoping for further information, but I obtained none. They did not know he was there.

ALEX ATKINSON

Next Week: A Nobleman in Reduced Circumstances



"Put your thumb on this a moment, will you?"

PUNCH

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Beer is Best?

CAN you remember how much liquid refreshment passed over the weirs of your gullet during the twelve days of Christmas? What was your catchment area? What was the rate of flow?

Christmas comes but once a year, and so for many people does the torrent of alcoholic drink and (for some) its attendant demon hangover. According to the statistician the adult British are knocking back beer at about 25 gallons per head per annum, sipping a gallon or so of wine, and totting up nearly a gallon of spirits—mostly Scotch. Impressive figures, at first sight, for publicans and shareholders in breweries, distilleries and the wine importing companies, but on closer examination more than satisfying to prohibitionists, the anti-liquor leagues and signatories of the pledge.

You see, total consumption of drink has not kept pace with the rise in population. Since 1939 the number of throats and whistles in the United Kingdom has increased by roughly five million, yet the total throughput of beer has improved by only two per cent, while wine and whisky consumption has fallen by seven and ten per cent respectively. We are drinking less of everything except *soft* drinks, which have tripled their sales during the last twenty years.

The Scotch situation is peculiar. Since the war the distillers have done splendid work in the export markets, particularly the dollar markets, and inevitably some of their liquid resources have been drained from the domestic scene. The years of drought have upset the old pattern of tippling and to-day we find that distribution—geographical and according to age-groups—is distinctly uneven. Some parts of the country are whisky-logged, others distressingly arid. Ask for a Scotch in—well, no names, no come-back and the barmaid suggests a double: ask for a nip in my pub and they send for mine host and his reference files.

Oddly enough it is the younger generation that provides the distillers with their sales resistance, and I say oddly because one would expect high prices to afflict and discourage elders

far more than young people brought up under the shadow of inflation. At 38s. 6d. a bottle of Scotch is not really more expensive in real terms than a bottle costing 12s. 6d. in 1938, but of course people with long memories still wince at the thought of laying out two shillings or half a crown for a dram or drappie. It is just possible that the distillers have made less effort than they should to win over the palates of the younger generations: certainly most of the advertising of whisky is still geared to the maturer elements in society, the greybeards, father figures, business tycoons, and by association to pre-war fashions and *mores*.

The wine trade was knocked flat by the war and is recovering slowly. Bibbers are ready and willing to pay ten shillings for a bottle of reasonable claret, burgundy, "Empire" equivalent

or home-made "-type" (Thurber's "It's a naïve domestic Burgundy without any breeding, but I think you'll be amused by its presumption"): on the other hand they jib increasingly at fancy prices of one pound and upwards. The great hope here is in the reductions to be expected from European Free Trade arrangements.

And so back to beer. The most important change in recent years has been the rehabilitation of the steady beer-man, the remarkable improvement in the comfort, amenities and décor of the ordinary pub. This is money well-spent by the brewers, though it is also greatly to the advantage of manufacturers of biscuits, crisps and sausage snacks—even, I am told, of coffee and cola drinks.

I am not indifferent at the moment to the charms of ordinary shares in Guinness, Distillers, Courage Barclay, Bass, Whitbread, Threlfall's, Ind Coope and, according to taste, one or two more. **MAMMON**

* * *



Now—Nature-Grown Apples!

APPLE growers in conference, like the cattle barons of the Old West, leave their guns at the door, but this does not diminish the aura of distrust which hangs in a homely way, like the Monarch of the Glen, over their meetings. Indeed apple growers rarely meet, except at annual dinners and hunt balls (to which they are taken, sulkily, by their wives), and have done so now only because with last year's small but good crop sold at high prices, and this year's blossom still many weeks away, they have at present little to worry about.

This is to apple growers an eerie experience, and though some have tried to make do with whether last year's losses will pay for next month's holiday at Mürren, it was clear that something more was needed.

So it is that the National Farmers' Union, through its Horticultural Committee, has produced a plan for an Apple and Pear Publicity Board. This, though not original—for apple growers spent a happy winter not long ago with a proposed (and rejected) Apple and Pear Marketing Board—offers worry

appeal by having vaguely in the background the Government. Apple growers distrust each other because they know each other, but they distrust the Government on principle. They believe, unanimously, that any proposal by the

Government is either not what it seems or won't be for long. And as the National Farmers' Union is known to be on speaking terms with the Board of Trade, apple growers have been seeing its publicity scheme as a parcel with "Happy Christmas" on the outside and a ticking noise within.

Their conferences—for no one has yet dared to get all the apple growers in the country under one roof—have already established two facts about the scheme which would in normal times kill it faster than tar oil on an aphid. The first is that growers will have to pay for it themselves and the second—even worse—is that it will be compulsory. But there are a great many growers who feel that the apple is as worth blowing a trumpet about as a box of chocolates and who are (although of course they can't afford it) prepared to pay the trumpeter. It is the thought that they should *have* to pay (even though this can't happen unless a majority of them vote in favour of the idea) which is creating among apple growers a feeling of brotherly love which may well last until the spring.

PHILIP HOLLAND



BOOKING OFFICE

Oh no, we never speak of it!

LIBERTY, somebody must have said, shifts but does not expand. Things once forbidden become permitted but simultaneously things once permitted become forbidden. To-day literature deals thoroughly with every aspect of sex, and elderly sigh for the time when a reference to an ankle set dreams ablaze. On the other hand, money, another traditional literary topic, has become almost unmentionable.

Older writers assumed that their readers had a sound grasp of the law of property, and the unreformed law at that. They could be as technical as they liked. One hears so much about the Victorian taboo on discussion of money that the Victorian novelists must have been deliberately pandering to depraved tastes, titillating them with frank descriptions of mortgages, outspokenness about codicils and lip-licking over compositions with creditors. Twanging away at the nerve of financial prudery to give perverted pleasure, they used the whole range of their subject-matter from marriage-settlements at one end of the scale to sponging-houses at the other.

Private interest in money is as strong as ever; but discussion of it in print has come under a ban. Poverty is dying out of fiction far faster than it is dying out of life. It has ceased to attract the politically-minded novelist. Left-wing fiction does not revel in elaborate descriptions of tax-dodging and white-tie frauds: right-wing fiction does not show the poor rotted by high wages and the rich by high taxation. Novels about factories, even about nationalized industries, ignore the profit and loss account and concentrate on the game of winning promotion: most heroes and villains to-day are men on salary. Many of the poor lost souls who wander through contemporary fiction are in trouble because they are all for psychology and nothing for economics.

At the lower levels of literature this queasiness about cash has left an even worse gap. Even in detective stories murder is increasingly rarely murder for gain. Murderers, instead of wanting to live comfortably and respectably on

Aunt's insurance, kill because of something that got at them and warped them way back. If the crime involves theft the author may give an arty sort of description of the stolen cameo, but he never goes into detail about how much it would fetch as between a willing buyer and a willing seller in Amsterdam compared with its price in Houston. James Bond never gets the daylight



beaten out of him because he won't tell where the Will is.

It is in humour that the free-spoken Victorians score over us most of all. It must be a very long time since anyone sold a funny story about a pawn-shop. It is nothing to do with the feeling that it is unkind to laugh at poverty. Most of the laughing was done by the poor, not the rich. The gallery laughed as much as the stalls at jokes about taking in lodgers and leaving the blinds up to show that there was furniture in the house and talking milkmen into giving another day's credit. Humorous papers were often written as though the entire staff was in hiding from duns. Comic relief in novels assumed that the average reader flitted every quarter-day. This kind of thing has died out completely. The stringency that exists in real life never gets described *in detail* in contemporary writing.

So little does modern literature hold the mirror up to life that I am not sure how far the law has been changed. Are there still brokers' men, outside pantomimes? Do they still dress up as men-servants when the debtor has his boss to dinner? There are still bankruptcies; but they seem to take place secretly. They rarely make the headlines like divorces. Few of the younger generation would smile at a reference to Carey Street, though it is still the home of the Bankruptcy Court. When the Victorian debtor was eventually flushed from the precincts of Windsor Castle he settled in apparent comfort in France. Is it any use nowadays moving to Boulogne if the money gets tight? Do affable acquaintances persuade innocents to back bills? Victorian humour was full of references to "paper" and it is always a waste when a successful joke is allowed to die. Foreclosures have vanished from fiction as completely as writs and bearer bonds. Clients of building societies would be relieved to know they had disappeared also from life.

Another gap has been left by the virtual extinction of the merry tale of ingenious deceit. I suppose it is all part of the great movement in the direction of identifying the mug and the oppressed. One of the functions of literature, if a minor one, is flaying fools, and it is a function that has been neglected lately. We no longer think that a fool and his money are soon parted. We think that being tricked out of money makes a reprehensible man into a pitiable man. In any case, we avert our eyes from the intrinsic interest of the money itself.

It is time for the swing of the pendulum. We cannot afford that a good, all-round subject should remain for ever hidden by the veil of decency. After all, money is the root of all evil, and that is more than has ever been said for sex.

R. G. G. PRICE

Cloak and Sword

The Diamond Smugglers. Ian Fleming. Cape, 12/6

This authentic account of the successful war waged by Sir Percy Sillitoe's organization against the illicit diamond traffic begins in the correct spy-story

tradition: the M.I.5 Chief recalled from retirement by the lure of a new assignment; there is plenty of odd detail: a security officer stabbed to death by an ostrich; an ingenious American who dealt in gems by airmail, appealing to the nationalism of African mine-workers; and the master-criminal, "Monsieur Diamant" ("above the law—a really formidable operator") remains unpunished. But "John Blaize," the principal agent involved, despite the possession of twenty-four fine white silk shirts, had little in common with James Bond except his initials. A non-smoker, he fell asleep in Tangier during the cabaret and parted from the night-club girl with relief; amorous blondes played no part in his adventures ("the girls don't come quite so pretty around the diamond fields"); and, to satisfy local curiosity during their discussions, Mr. Fleming passed him off as the discoverer of the coelacanth. ("He had caught one alive. It was in his bath at the hotel.")

J. M. R.

Frederick II of Hohenstaufen. A Life. Georgina Masson. Secker and Warburg, 35/-

Frederick *Stupor Mundi* was the father of Italian poetry and of more illegitimates than Charles II. His treatises on falconry showed an accuracy alien to his age and suitably enough he discovered the domestic habits of cuckoos.

This versatile and brilliant prince with green eyes and red hair and an entourage of cheetahs, falcons, slaves, brocades, and a travelling harem imprinted on the thirteenth century the "hoof-mark of illustrious crime." Of Germanic and Norman-Sicilian blood, he combined Arab, Levantine and Latin culture; attempted the impossible in uniting Germany and Sicily and mastering Rome, and was brought to ruin by the Papacy, which could never admit a Holy Roman Empire centred in Italy. *Deus Fredericus Caesar* was nearer to the world of Trajan than of his romantic ancestor Barbarossa. He was a Mediterranean man, an epicure, a collector of Tanagra figurines and antique sculpture. He scandalized his contemporaries by taking a daily bath. He combined scepticism with humour; introduced a girl into the bedroom of St. Francis of Assisi and watched the proceedings (which were blameless) through a key-hole.

This vivid book is to be unreservedly recommended and it contains a tall fishing story. A pike was caught in 1497 with a ring in its gills. This declared "I am the fish that the Emperor Frederick II put into the lake with his own hands on the fifth October, 1230." J. E. B.

Dwarfs and Jesters in Art. With ninety illustrations. E. Tietze-Conrat. Phaidon, 27/6

Mr. Punch himself comes somewhere in the background of the taste that led

to the employment of dwarfs and jesters, and the pictures in this book present an excellent display of these personages from the earliest times to the eighteenth century. The text is less enjoyable. Herr E. Tietze-Conrat's essay is diffuse and somewhat repetitive, and his style has not been improved in translation from the German. He collects together a great deal of information about individual dwarfs and jesters, mostly of the golden age of court dwarfs—the period between the middle of the fifteenth century and the middle of the seventeenth century—but, although he makes references to the love of contrast that made the dwarf's owner regard the dwarf as a suitable foil to his own splendour, he never quite manages to convey his own knowledge to the reader in a digestible form or to get to grips with the many psychological implications involved. There are two pictures here of Sir Jeffrey Hudson, Henrietta Maria's dwarf, who killed one of that Queen's equerries in a duel, and portraits of many other famous midgets and buffoons.

A. P.

True Account. E. W. D. Tennant. Parrish, 21/-

For half their pages these memoirs jog along well-cushioned with cheerful trivialities in a rather untidy jumble of personal happenings always briskly told and sometimes exciting—strange meetings in strange places, natural history on the Orinoco, a nasty mauling by a lion in Rhodesia, premonitions that seemed to come true, a snake that refused to stay dead. Then quite abruptly the book turns serious.

The author developed intimate business contacts with those leaders of German industry who supported early Nazism as a defence against Communism and was soon on particularly friendly terms with Ribbentrop, thereupon becoming urgently, agonizingly, active in efforts to persuade our Foreign Office to take Hitler and his movement seriously, even to treat him more courteously before it was too late. Whether in fact the result could have been different had our diplomacy been more flexible Mr. Tennant himself is doubtful to-day, for Hitler's mounting megalomania was fatally evident at a final meeting, but he feels still that one of history's greatest opportunities may have been lost.

C. C. P.

AT THE BALLET

A Blue Rose—The Angels
(COVENT GARDEN)
The Nutcracker
(FESTIVAL HALL)

THE second of the two companies constituting the Royal Ballet made its first appearance at the Royal Opera House on Boxing Day. Its connection with Sadler's Wells having been completely and suddenly ended, it is



"Cold! Good heavens, how would you feel if you were where Fuchs and Hillary, Malenkov or Zhukov are?"

now based on Covent Garden with a view to the complete amalgamation of the two into one.

Any misgivings about the junior company's ability to fill the great spaces of the Royal Opera House were dispelled as soon as the curtain had risen on *Pineapple Poll* with which very sensibly, as a prelude to two new ballets, it opened a short London season. *A Blue Rose* is a first ballet by Peter Wright who has based his choreography on Samuel Barber's *Souvenirs* suite. The result is a slight and gently poetic meditation on the changing moods and fancies of young love. The piece is richer in promise than in accomplishment. It has the merit of unimpeded fluidity of motion and gives opportunity for dancing, both graceful and spirited, in which Anne Heaton and Audrey Farriss excelled.

The other new ballet is by John Cranko, whose *Poll* had shown his earlier exuberance at its best. *The Angels*, to new music by Richard Arnell, is described as a choreographic myth, but unlike Mr. Cranko's mythological *Harlequin in April* its symbolism is too cryptic to allow even a main stream of significance to come to the surface. There is an Angel of Light, enveloped from head to foot in ample black, and there are groups of men and women in frenzied strife. One is chosen by the Angel and the rest left. Mr. Cranko had, doubtless, a grand conception of human agony and aspiration but he has failed to bring it recognizably to birth in terms of the dance. Many of the movements he

assigns to the men are gymnastic rather than balletic and have no discernible aesthetic or dramatic significance. They include lifts of men by men and are just plain ugly. On the whole, despite some first-rate dancing served by eloquent passages in classical tradition, *The Angels* attempts too much; certainly more than Mr. Cranko's creative imagination can cope with.

At the Festival Hall the holiday attraction is the London County Council's presentation of *The Nutcracker* at full length. There have been many versions of *Casse Noisette*—Balanchine's was done as recently as 1954 for the Paris Opéra—and all have departed, some radically, from Ivanov's original, so that almost the only constant elements are Tchaikovsky's tuneful music, the *Grand Pas de Deux* in the last act and the celebrated Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy. The Festival Ballet dances in David Lichine's choreography which gives to the small girl Clara a more active part throughout than is usual but does not change her, as at the Scala, Milan, into a grown-up fairy.

The Nutcracker has become a vehicle for whatever the producer likes to display. Anton Dolin, artistic director of the company, with his flair for gauging public taste, has made it a lively family entertainment. The opening scenes of the children's party bring in a troupe of well-trained children to realistic effect. A transformation scene surprisingly contrived on the shallow platform of the hall converts a drab domestic interior into a

gleaming wintry forest and thence the transition to the Kingdom of Sweets is in a fairy-tale tradition which disarms serious criticism.

John Gilpin, the company's greatest asset, makes a dazzling figure as the Prince and his superior brilliance is evident when he partners Natalie Krassovska, the Sugar Plum Fairy, in the *pas de deux*. Mediocre orchestral playing by a section of the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Julian Corbett had no ill-effect on the jollity which pervaded stage and auditorium.

C. B. MORTLOCK

AT THE PLAY

A Midsummer Night's Dream
(OLD VIC)

A Stranger in the Tea (ARTS)
Robinson Crusoe (PALLADIUM)

JAMES BAILEY has backed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with enviable salmon pools which suggest that good poaching is there for the artisans of Athens when they tire of amateur theatricals. The river dominates a Claude landscape, and in the foreground is a palpably artificial wood that breathes a magic air by moonlight. Mr. Bailey has dressed the play as delightfully as he has set it. In particular his Oberon becomes a gorgeous creature, more bird than fairy, and in a beautifully poised performance Derek Godfrey reveals a cynical intelligence rare in elfland. He and Coral Browne are the highlights of Michael Benthall's happy production. Miss Browne brings something new to

Helena, who is now not merely a woman spurned unfairly but one anxious, in a half-humorous spirit of inquiry, to solve the chemical mysteries of male selection.

Mr. Benthall has succeeded both in preserving intact the contrasts between court and fairies and mechanicals, and in making their interplay unusually natural. His touch is light, his production amusing without distortion; though here I must put in what appears to be a minority report on Frankie Howerd as Bottom. All praise to him for subduing, as much as he does, his normal antics; but even so, against the admirably straight comedy of his fellows, especially the cosy Quince of Paul Daneman, he cannot help trying to be a little too funny. Titania and Hermia are in good hands with Joyce Redman and Rosemary Webster.

A story by Sheridan Le Fanu, the Victorian ghoulster, forms the basis of *A Stranger in the Tea*, by Lilian and Edward Percy. It was probably more exciting in print; on the stage its unwinding is very slow and the hero is forced to explain his curious circumstances in lengthy monologues. Certainly he has a good deal to explain. A vague and scholarly clergyman, he dopes himself with green tea (does this really produce the effects of opium?), studies phallic worship with apologetic fervour, falls madly in love with his innocent young secretary and is haunted by a personal devil whom only she has power to banish. Late in the play we discover he is also a bit of a homicidal maniac, and are perhaps less surprised than some of his entourage, for whom he has been simply a jittery eccentric. His hopes dashed of marriage with the virtuous Effie, his devil is there for keeps, tirelessly flashing its infra-red eyes at him.

The terror and the sense of evil that might have set a match to our imagination are unfortunately missing, leaving a too leisurely study of mental aberration that is only mildly pathetic. It's a pity, because the play is carefully written and the minor characters are firmly drawn. Although the authors are chiefly at fault, I think Robert Eddison is miscast. His tea-sodden clergyman is a delicate and consistent piece of acting, but someone less sensitive might have hit us harder. The period supports are sound, Pamela Strong's ingenuous girl, Helen Miscner's German housekeeper and Edward Evans' kindly butler-cum-nurse.

It would have been as difficult to convince Defoe that *Robinson Crusoe* was taken from his book as to persuade a Victorian that an entertainment which is almost an adult musical should now pass for pantomime. A sprinkling of blue jokes are there to satisfy the brutish father for whom too many allegedly children's pieces seem partly written, and also some terribly sugared romantic ditties at which intelligent infants I hope



Big-Hearted Martha—ARTHUR ASKEY

Abu—TOMMY COOPER

would blench, but all the same I believe children will like it. This child did, for two reasons. As lavish spectacle, of uncommon originality and taste, it would make the Folies Bergère take stock; the submarine ballet, with figures twirling in mid-water, is a knock-out. And secondly, Arthur Askey and Tommy Cooper combine profitably in near-surrealist humour which makes a welcome change from the old Twankey stuff. For me it was worth swallowing all the sugar to see these two, bombarded by small fish, strap-hanging in a whale.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)
Flowering Cherry (Haymarket—27/11/57), death of a salesman. *Roar Like a Dove* (Phoenix—2/10/57), outrageous adult comedy. *The Entertainer* (Palace—17/4/57) offers a great performance by Laurence Olivier.

ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES

Count Five and Die
The Devil's Hairpin

"COUNT five and die" is apparently what you do when you take a cyanide capsule; and *Count Five and Die* (Director: Victor Vicas) is unusual among secret-service thrillers in making clear the basic unpleasantness of the job of being a secret agent. "Have no friends, never allow your emotions to be involved at all"—these and similar stern injunctions are among the commonplaces of the spy story, so that most readers and most audiences have ceased to think about them or remember that they are meant to be taken quite literally. If the girl and the man on opposite sides fall in love, the usual spy story contrives to fiddle things so that they prove to be really on the same side after all; the idea that they might have to part or even kill each other for the sake of their jobs is too upsetting to contemplate.

Here we get some idea of what the business really means, in a thoroughly well-made and exciting piece, announced as "a true story from the annals of O.S.S.," set in London in 1944. The focus is on a small unit under the command of Major Howard (Nigel Patrick), the main function of which is to mislead the enemy about the place of the impending Allied invasion. They are ostensibly a seedy little documentary-film company, but their cameras are trained on people going in and out of significant doorways and so forth, and the story is a matter of double and even treble bluff—for it is apparently assumed that some of them will be enemy agents, and only the Major seems to be quite certain of what is going on.

It is by no means a conventional story, and this will disconcert people who expect the young American second-in-command (Jeffrey Hunter) to get the girl (Annemarie Düringer). But as a picture



[*Count Five and Die*

Major Howard—NIGEL PATRICK

Roland Hertog—ANNEMARIE DÜRINGER

Captain Ranson—JEFFREY HUNTER

of war-time London, as an action story told with convincing and entertaining visual and auditory detail, where the dialogue makes its points with the natural hesitations and subtleties of expression that only the film can show, it is satisfyingly well worth seeing. It is not perhaps for the simple minds whose entire opinion of a film can be altered by what almost accidentally occurs in the last few minutes (the people for whom the "happy ending" was contrived—or, rather, merely stated—in *Manuela*), but it is for anyone who can appreciate good screen-writing, good acting and good film-making. And the sequences of suspense and action, and the London setting that offers the simple pleasure of recognition and recollection of what life was like in those days—these can make their effect on anybody at all.

A far glossier work (VistaVision and Technicolor) is *The Devil's Hairpin* (Director: Cornel Wilde), but this too in its way is remarkably good and enjoyable. It is glossy, but intelligent: a most unusual combination.

Here again there is a point that will surprise those who expect something on conventional lines. The "hero" (Mr. Wilde himself—he also produced, and collaborated on the script) is superficially not at all a sympathetic character: a retired sports-car racing champion who made many enemies by his ruthlessness in action, he now constantly makes more by boasting and refusing to admit that anyone else is as good. The picture opens just as he has been needled into racing again, and then there is a long flashback showing what led up to this moment. It is to be noted by all who object on principle to flashbacks (which

is about as sensible as objecting on principle to all films concerning people below five feet eleven in height) that the very nature of this story makes the flashback method of telling it worth while and useful: the fact that we know from the start that he was induced, against his will, to go in for the race has the effect of increasing our interest and concentrating our attention on what made him do it, and strengthening the suspense of the climactic sequence which is the race itself. It is brilliantly photographed and cut and very exciting, and the point of the story is that at the turn known as "the Devil's Hairpin," where by his selfish ruthlessness he once crippled his own brother, he now (because of what he has since learned) allows an opponent the advantage. This may sound conventional enough; but of its kind, the film is good, as well as entertaining throughout.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

In London: the Indian *Pather Panchali* (1/1/58) is top of my list—though I don't approve of lists. Nearly everything else worth seeing is on a different level, straightforward good entertainment with no depth: the inventive British farce *Blue Murder at St. Trinian's* (1/1/58), the very funny U.S. army comedy *The Sad Sack*, the first-rate colour musical *The Pajama Game* (18/12/57), and good old *Around the World in Eighty Days* (17/7/57).

Two good releases: the amusing *Barnacle Bill* (25/12/57), and the gripping *Time Limit* (20/11/57). *The Pride and the Passion* (23/10/57), though visually magnificent, I found pretty boring otherwise.

RICHARD MALLETT



ON THE AIR

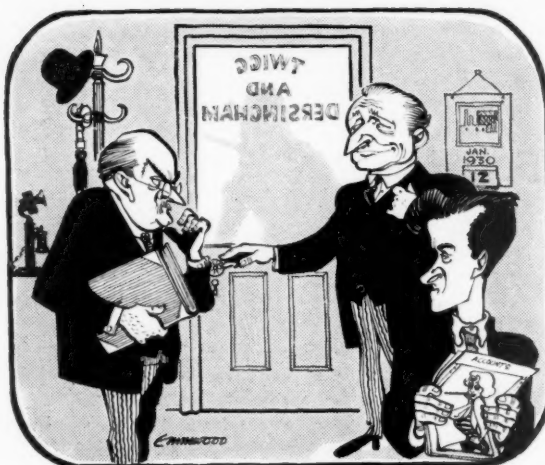
Sent Dancing

IN matters of popular music and dancing this country has become two nations—two nations perhaps with split minds. On the one hand we have the rock 'n' rollers and skiffle fans, the casual dilettantish crowd of jivers and quasi-jivers: on the other we have the precise old-world elegant posturing of the palais ballroom. Never, it seems, the twain shall meet.

The rock 'n' rollers borrow their inspiration from America—also their clothes, blue jeans and sloppy sweaters, and most of their music. The ballroom lot look back to plushy hunt balls of long ago, to Old Vienna, to the Duchess of Richmond's *soirée* at Brussels in 1815. They wear fabulous frocks containing rod after pole after perch of tulle or something, splendid tails and looks of resigned superiority.

I enjoy seeing both sets in action. The B.B.C.'s "Six-Five Special" caters for the former. There are teen-agers with glazed expressions of adoration, keeping time with minute jerks of the head and a series of hand-signs borrowed, I imagine, from the tick-tack johnnies of the race-course. There are singers with mid-Atlantic nasal accents and the current gimmick of hiccupping on stressed vowel sounds. There are blues shouters and crooners; there is always the solid beat and sometimes there is a hint of swing.

Ballroom types are seen at their best in "Come Dancing," an apparently endless competition to discover champion couples and teams in such routines as Old Time, Formation and Modern. The



Mr. Smeeth—MAURICE DENHAM Turgis—ALEC McCOWEN
Mr. Dersingham—ANTHONY SHARP

[Angel Pavement]

dancers perform to set pieces of music—like ace ice-skaters—and with the precision of guardsmen on parade. There are bursts of knowledgeable applause for fancy bits, a double shuffle or a flurry of skips. There are sighs when a promising seven-league Groucho Marxian prowl is ruined by an unpremeditated glissando. The men are expected to be ramrod straight, dominant and facially aloof: the girls bend at the waist like the second stroke of a capital "K" and radiate glamour *à la* Hollywood. It is very exciting.

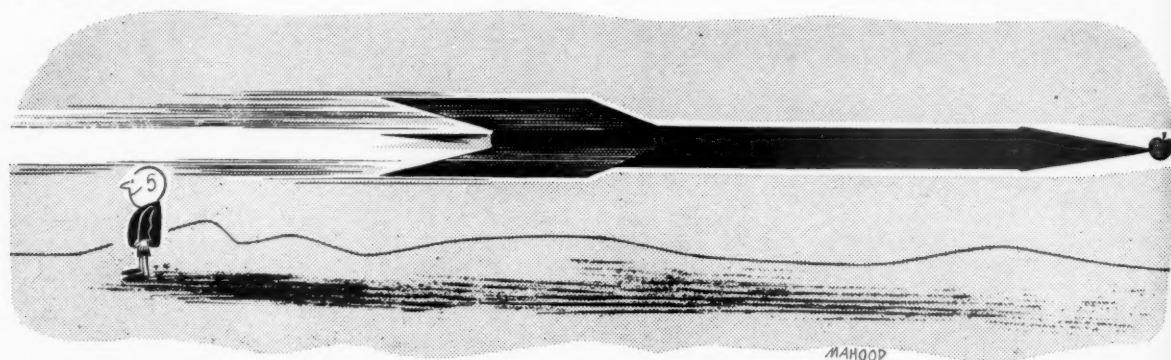
The twain do meet in a sense, at least their music does, in the programme "Off the Record." There, if you are good at reading faces, you can tell at a glance which type of music, ballroom pops or rhythmic rock, Jack Payne is introducing. He is, I regret to say, something of a square. A jolly decent and efficient figure, no doubt, but square.

Which side will win the battle of the ballrooms? I don't know. Latin America has had a good innings. So has Vienna. So has the U.S.A. It may be that something *à la Russe* will soon be the teen-ager's Terpsichorean treat. I hope it goes with a swing.

What a joy it is—after the plague of tricky science fiction serials and whodunits—to find TV drama turning to old-fashioned characterization and middle-class atmospheric. If you have not already sampled *Angel Pavement*, done up into four neat episodes by Constance Cox, I urge you to make a Friday night appointment immediately with Maurice Denham, Sydney Tafler, Maureen Pryor, Margaret Tyzack, Alec

McCowen and colleagues.

In his Dickensian mood J. B. Priestley seldom puts a foot wrong or wastes a line: *Angel Pavement* on the little screen is immensely satisfying because its texture, like the surface of sawn oak, is ubiquitously rich and challenging. The viewer wants to get in there, among the dust and ledgers, cocoa and crumpets of the 'twenties. In a note about this adaptation of the novel J.B.P. says "Younger viewers need to be reminded that nearly everybody, thirty years ago, lived in the menacing shadow of unemployment . . . And unless this is understood, the story cannot be understood." I don't think he need worry: John Jacobs's production makes the point crystal clear, even to people who have somehow missed all the "Scrapbook" programmes and the aerial transcriptions of Galsworthy, Cronin, Spring, Greenwood, Llewellyn and company. BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



MAHOOO

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